State of Iowa
Smart Planning Goals and Benchmarks

"SMART PLANNING" should result in…
greater economic opportunity;
enhanced environmental integrity;
improved public health; and
an improved and safeguarded quality of life for all Iowans.

Introduction

The Iowa Smart Planning bill (contained in Senate File 2389) was signed into law by Governor Culver on April 26, 2010. A section of this law established the Smart Planning Task Force and charged the members with several tasks to advance smart planning principles in Iowa. One of these tasks was to develop statewide goals for comprehensive planning that utilize the Iowa Smart Planning Principles laid out in the legislation and to create a process for measuring progress toward achieving these goals. While many aspects of smart planning are outlined in the goal descriptions that follow; the overarching goal for Iowa is to make smart planning accessible and achievable statewide for communities of all sizes through education, incentives and technical support.

Iowa's Smart Planning Principles

1. Collaboration
2. Efficiency, Transparency and Consistency
3. Clean, Renewable and Efficient Energy
4. Occupational Diversity
5. Revitalization
6. Housing Diversity
7. Community Character
8. Natural Resources and Agricultural Protection
9. Sustainable Design
10. Transportation Diversity

GOAL 1: Local and Regional Land Use

Integrate the Iowa Smart Planning Principles into local and regional comprehensive planning through the planning and development processes.

The legislation signed into law in April of 2010 states that the Iowa Smart Planning Principles must be considered and may be applied when local governments deliberate on all appropriate planning, zoning, development, and resource management decisions. Incorporating these principles into planning not only addresses environmental, economic and quality of life concerns; but also creates fair and equitable decision-making regarding the growth of communities.

Policy 1.1: Smart Planning Areas

Smart planning areas should be created to accommodate the projected demand for new development or revitalization based on data and projections contained in the local plan. New development should shift to smart planning areas that follow the Iowa Smart Planning Principles.

Benchmarks

1.1.1 Identification, quantification and prioritization of smart planning areas for a 20 year period and percent of projected demand each smart planning area will accommodate.

1.1.2 Increase in the amount of new development in identified smart planning areas compared to the total amount of all new development (amount, description, and ratio).

1.1.3 Increase the average density (e.g. units/acre, floor area ratio) of new development compared to the average density of existing development within identified smart planning areas.

1.1.4 Discourage or prohibit annexation of land that is not within an identified smart planning area.

1.1.5 Increase public investment in identified smart planning areas.

Policy 1.2: Protection Areas and Agricultural Land

Protection areas should be created to enhance and restore such natural systems functions as ground water recharge, storage of flood waters, protection of habitat and unique natural areas; or to maintain and enhance the economic and functional viability of agricultural land (including local food production) and mineral resources; or to protect areas of cultural or historic significance. Development in protected areas should be discouraged or prohibited.

Benchmarks

1.2.1 Identification, quantification and prioritization of protection areas.

1.2.2 Decrease the amount of new development in identified protection areas compared to the total amount of all new development.

1.2.3 Increase the amount of land within identified protection areas which are protected by land development regulations, special state programs or voluntary means.

1.2.4 Identify local food producers and support the growth of local food production and consumption (e.g. increase the amount of land devoted to the production of local foods, increase the market value of local food production, increase the availability of foods through farmer's markets, etc.).

1.2.5 Increase the number of local food system plans adopted across the state through participation in regional food system working groups and other related programs.

Policy 1.3: Housing Diversity
A community's housing stock should be diverse, affordable and sustainable.

Benchmarks
1.3.1 Increase the number of existing housing units converted into more "dense" units (e.g. "granny flats", accessory apartments, live-work units) with or without demolition of existing buildings.

1.3.2 Increase the number of new and rehabilitated affordable housing units.

1.3.3 Decrease the number and percentage of residents who spend more than 30 percent of their household income on housing, including utilities.

Policy 1.4: Sustainable Design
The planning process should encourage the use of sustainable design in development. Communities should be leaders by using smart planning principles when developing public land.

Benchmarks
1.4.1 Increase the amount of new development utilizing low impact development (LID) techniques.

1.4.2 Increase the amount of new development meeting or exceeding recognized energy conservation standards or achieving energy conservation certification from a recognized nation program (e.g. LEED, NAHB).

1.4.3 Increase the amount of development of "reused" land and buildings (i.e. redevelopment as opposed to new development on greenfield sites).

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1.4.4 Increase the conversion of vacant, buildable land within identified smart planning areas.

1.4.5 Increase the number of Iowa cities and counties that have adopted and enforce a nationally recognized building code, including the state energy code.

1.4.6 Increase the number of new homes obtaining a building permit for construction.

Policy 1.5: Transportation Diversity
Communities and regions should encourage diversity in transportation and decrease the reliance on personal vehicles through smart planning principles.

Benchmarks
1.5.1 Decrease the number of vehicle miles traveled per capita or vehicle hours traveled per capita.

1.5.2 Increase the number of trips made by carpool, public transportation, bicycles, walking or working at home.

GOAL 2: PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATION

Generate and sustain knowledge among local officials and citizens about the benefits of smart planning by creating education and training opportunities for local governments focused on the importance of creating and implementing a comprehensive plan.

Achieving comprehensive smart planning statewide is not possible if the general public, government staff and elected officials are unaware of the process of planning, the benefits of planning, and the elements of a sustainable plan. Many agencies are available and able to effectively communicate the value of comprehensive planning as an opportunity to:

a. start a community conversation;
b. envision a common future;
c. learn about other communities' experiences and lessons learned;
d. evaluate current conditions and resources;
e. evaluate problems, issues and hazards;
f. plan for change (whether that means growth, maintenance or decline);
g. reach a consensus on clear choices and actions;
h. move ahead with confidence; and
i. celebrate successes.

The State, councils of governments (COGs), the Iowa League of Cities, the Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC), state universities and many others should advocate for creation and implementation of local and regional comprehensive plans by educating communities on how to undertake planning and helping communities build the necessary capacity to complete and sustain plans and implementation.

Policy 2.1: Encourage Citizen Involvement

Citizen should be encouraged to become involved in the planning process through activities like public input sessions. The more citizens participate in developing a plan, the more sustainable and transparent the plan will be.

Benchmarks

2.1.1 Conduct at least two public participation sessions when developing a plan: 1) a beginning, visioning process and 2) a draft review and finalization session.

2.1.2 Increase access to plans through online availability and outreach materials.

Policy 2.2: Training and Education

Training courses on smart planning should be offered through state or other non-profit agencies for the public, government staff, and elected and appointed officials. These courses can include information on the Iowa Smart Planning Principles, smart planning techniques, the comprehensive planning process, watershed and regional planning, and other information necessary to encourage comprehensive smart planning statewide.

Benchmarks

2.2.1 Collaboration of state agencies, non-profits and universities to create a training program for local and regional officials.

2.2.2 Development of an effective outreach program on planning for the public to educate communities on how to undertake comprehensive planning and advocate for communities to create and implement comprehensive planning.

2.2.3 Increase in number of participants (public, elected and appointed officials, staff) completing a smart planning education program.

GOAL 3: RESOURCES AND ASSISTANCE

Create a "toolbox" for smart planning that provides resources such as model guidance and technical support, allowing local governments to keep costs down and best implement smart planning in their communities.

The State, councils of governments (COGs), the Iowa League of Cities, the Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC), state universities and other statewide organizations are necessary advocates for communities to create and *implement* comprehensive planning in order to achieve statewide goals. Increased participation and education on the benefits of planning will create buy-in of local government and citizens to carry out the vision laid out in their plan. These organizations are also necessary in helping communities build the capacity to complete and sustain planning efforts.

Policy 3.1: Assistance
Current planning data should be analyzed at the state-level and a targeted approach of assistance should be implemented.

Benchmarks
3.1.1   Creation of baseline data regarding planning and development in the state.

3.1.2   Identification and "triaging" of areas of the state that have greater needs and greater issues for assistance.

3.1.3   Creation of statewide "best practices" database.

3.1.4   Increase incentives for implementation of plans and watershed planning.

3.1.5   Enactment of legislation to allow joint planning, shared jurisdictions, joint boards and commissions, etc.

Policy 3.2: Developing Tools
The State, in collaboration with the above-mentioned organizations, should develop and collect the necessary data and resources to populate the planning "toolbox".

Benchmarks

3.2.1   Creation of a model, streamlined process and template for a comprehensive plan (followed by zoning and subdivision ordinances) for communities to follow that can be tailored to the specific needs of each community.

3.2.2   Creation of an online comprehensive plan and zoning/subdivision ordinance library.

3.2.3   Increase availability of best available data on flood mapping, runoff and precipitation.

Policy 3.3: Success and Results

Success in planning should be celebrated at all levels. Results from planning processes and implementation as well as unique and innovative practices should be shared throughout the state to encourage more effective planning and increase Iowa's quality of life.

Benchmarks

3.3.1 Completion of an annual "State of Smart Planning" report on key metrics.

3.3.2 Effective use of technology in all aspects of education and outreach.